



Envision Arlington Diversity Task Group

Date: Monday, July 6, 2020
Time: 6:45 - 9:00 PM
Location: Online, via Zoom

Attendance: Katell Guellec, Michaiah Healy, Anna Litten, Claire Johnson, Chris DiMeo, Rajeev Soneja, Paula Jordan, Kelly Lynema, Jill Lewis, Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Rachel McDowell, Michael Jacoby Brown, Jill Lewis, Megan Crowe-Rothstein, Sandy Lacie

Minutes

1. Introductions and general well-being check-ins (Katell)
2. Zoom protocols (Rajeev)
3. June meeting minutes (Rajeev)
Will be sent later.
4. Arlington Reads: seeking new committee members
Time to bring the community together around issues the town is dealing with. Nomination period is open until July 17th. The group is soliciting book nominations for next year (2021).

One of the tasks of the committee is to elevate discussion in the community. This seems like the right time to talk about systemic racism in Arlington and in the world. We need to have more diversity in this group- underrepresented voices. The group will get together to talk about the books, and invite authors and other speakers to speak to Arlington.

Advocating for more budget for Arlington speakers. The theme of this next year is "Arlington and the nation- discuss race and inequity in all of our lives."

Literature is a way to bring people together.

Question from DTG member: How are you already going about soliciting new voices?

Answer: FB page and our blog, 8,000 people on our constant contact email list; a member from Arlington Reads comes to community groups and we hope these groups can share what we're doing among their networks.

Arlington Reads is able to create a community wide event/you get to set a table of conversation to engage people around an idea- many participate in fascinating conversation.

5. Anti-racism activities and recent "community conversations" in Arlington (Rajeev)

Background: A police officer wrote hateful and racist writings in a state wide public publication; the Town followed a Restorative Justice process; many were not satisfied with the response; DTG organized a meeting with the Chief and Town Manager; What followed was a series of meetings at the Select Board; A group was formed called Arlington Fights Racism; Wrote a petition to get the person on desk duty among other demands; Last Fall there was a 1st community meeting led by Visions Inc; there was a promise for more community meetings; Pandemic thrown everything off kilter; in June the town announced hiring of a new EDI position and in December the town hired Jill Harvey as Coordinator EDI; came as a surprise because we had been involved with leadership that DTG was not invited to shape the community forum; DTG co-chairs wrote a letter to the Town manager and the Chief;

Another member emailed reached out - all were reached out; the purpose was to make sure that all had a stake in the conversation.

What were people's impressions who attended the community forum?

- Forum: preaching forum/ encouraged to interact. The content was scripted and staged but- good. But it wasn't a community conversation. People weren't invited to be included in the conversation; People weren't given the opportunity to be heard and to be valued. The forum wasn't effective. It was an overture and here are 6 issues we're going to ask our leaders to respond to. There were 4 or 5 press releases. But it wasn't a conversation.
- There was good material. But you were witnessing a talk. Everyone presented good ideas and communication about the issues.
- I did appreciate Dr. MacNeal- talking about the real issues facing APS. It was good to see the APS acknowledge there were issues. Especially it was a bone of contention in the election. Appreciated that point of view.
- Using dog whistle for single family zoning. I was dismayed by the Chief's [dismissal] of defunding. Was unfortunate to be dismayed.
- It was an interesting panel- 3 POC, first female Chief- impressed by her honesty with APD. Diverse panel for Arlington.
- Adam is responsible; Why is Dr. Bodie not there? I don't know how much she shares with Dr. MacNeal; I'm questioning the role in APS.
- Such an opportunity to listen
- Not leaning into the difficult issues- larger systemic issue- place for policy introduction- people level questions- that are uncomfortable for town leadership to address. 20 demands from the black alums-- let's talk about the questions-- serious questions- leaning into the conversation. -- getting down to stories.
- PoC to a focus group to hear
- This created expectations for how this is going to go with further conversations. Groups in town and community. There's a disconnect in what the community feels-- there's a well intention piece—
- Would you share the letter DTG co-chairs wrote to the town manager and the chief of police (and the new EDI coordinator).
- Do you want to be a co-sponsor AHRC- the night before the event. This was cooked in a meeting and then produced to the public.

Future community meetings: The AHRC added a 5th forum on housing and diversity which Commissioner Crystal Reeds is going to facilitate.

6. Black Student Union petition

The BSU reached out to DTG to be engaged with their petition and the protest. Michaiah spoke at the protest.

DTG wants to know tonight if DTG should sign on as a group to the BSU/Alumns demands.

The event was phenomenal with great speakers providing interesting points of view- the diversity of variety of experiences-the teenagers were in tears because of their experiences in Arlington. They wanted to hold a rally, march around Arlington, decorate the mural, who was supporting their efforts/this was purely conceived by them/the administrators of APS were questioning them. /BSU organizers changed their names to the Black Alums.

DTG can sign the BSU petition;

DTG can invite the Black Alums to the next DTG meeting and ask how we can support their next efforts;

These are all do-able things on the petition- these are things that they can do tomorrow.

- Discussion about mascots:
It was made by Cyrus Dallin- the whole representation of mascots/ is problematic/many natives have spoken, Mass Tribe Office- and they have a website.
Can invite Fares Gray to DTG- Fares Sagamore Gray- part of the official tribe
There is a school committee meeting- the link on the town website. 6:30-10pm to talk about school disparities. Urged public school to look into it/
44 letters of families of color wrote letters about their displeasure and experiences in APS.

An article in the globe to cover a lot of these issues will come out.

You can read about the BSU protest from the newspaper Your Arlington-peaceful protest- Jean Remy.

Meeting notes taken by Michaiah Healy
Adjourned at 9:08 PM.